

Lake County News Sun, March 25, 2008

Noting an increase in serious crime, officials on Monday released a list of Lake County's 10 most-wanted street gang members as part of a multi-jurisdictional crackdown on gangs.

"You would think we would be in the city of Chicago making an announcement like this," said U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk, R-Highland Park. "Gang violence in the suburbs is increasing. There are 2,000 documented gang members operating north of Lake-Cook Road. They bring murder, mayhem, drugs and wasted lives to our suburban communities."

Kirk was joined by representatives of several Lake County police departments and by Andy Traver, a special agent with the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

"ATF has been working in Lake County for three years now," Traver said, adding that gang activity is not limited to shoreline communities in the county. "It's time to look well beyond the borders of Waukegan."

With a \$846,000 grant secured by Kirk, officials are forming a Northern Illinois Gang Task Force and hope for the participation of all law enforcement agencies in Lake County.

Citing recent state statistics, officials said serious crime increased by 3.1 percent in Lake County between 2005 and 2006, a period in which serious crime decreased statewide by almost two percent.

Increased gang activity in the suburbs is attributed in part to less competition with other gangs than there is in Chicago and an opportunity to expand the illicit drug market.

"They are influencing our young people. They are in our schools, presenting a hazard to all of

us," said Deputy Chief Kevin Parker of the Lake County Sheriff's Office.

The participation of ATF in the task force allows gang members to be brought up on federal charges, which carry longer prison terms with no parole, Traver said. He also said that on conviction, gang offenders can be sent to out-of-state federal institutions where they are unable to continue running local gangs from behind bars.

The most-wanted gang members outlined Monday are wanted on charges ranging from murder to drug trafficking and carjacking.

Topping the list is Jose Pedro Delgado, whose last known address was in Waukegan. He is wanted for the 2003 shooting death of Jesus Montes-DeOca, an 18-year-old who was killed while walking to a gym. Police believe Delgado was aiming for someone walking next to Montes- DeOca.

Officials are asking residents who know anything about the potential location of the wanted gang members to contact their local police departments by phone or e-mail. The information may be submitted confidentially.

The top 10 gang list will be posted on the sheriff's Web site at www.co.lake.il.us/sheriff .

"We need to get a handle on this and start locking these people up," said Mundelein Police Chief Raymond Rose, who said the increase in gang activity has led to increased violence.

Rose said the partnership between agencies should be a strong tool in gang enforcement.

"One of the things we're trying to do is make a very strong statement that we're working together," he said.